

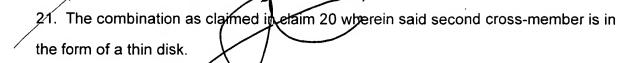
1. A fastener for coupling together two or more items, said fastener comprising:

- (a) a connector having a first end and a second end,
- (b) a first cross-member formed onto the first end of said connector, said first cross-member comprising a flat inner surface and a flat outer surface, and
 - (c) a second cross-member formed onto the second end of said connector.
- 2. The fastener as claimed in claim 1 wherein said first cross-member is in the form of a thin disk.
- 3. The fastener as claimed in claim 2 wherein said first cross-member is in the form of a thin disk which is generally circular in lateral cross-section.
- 4. The fastener as claimed in claim 2 wherein the inner surface of said first cross-member has a surface area which is slightly greater than the surface area of the outer surface of said first cross-member.
- 5. The fastener as claimed in claim 2 wherein said first cross-member comprises a side surface which extends between the inner surface of said first cross-member and the outer surface of said first cross-member.
- 6. The fastener as claimed in claim 5 wherein the side surface of said first crossmember is rounded.



- 7. The fastener as claimed in claim 1 wherein said connector is in the form of a thin, straight filament.
- 8. The fastener as claimed in claim 1 wherein the first end of said connector is formed onto the approximate center of the inner surface of said first cross-member.
- 9. The fastener as claimed in claim 1 wherein said second cross-member comprises a flat inner surface and a flat outer surface.
- 10. The fastener as claimed in claim 9 wherein said second cross-member is in the form of a thin disk.
- 11. The fastener as claimed in claim 1 wherein said fastener is constructed of plastic.
- 12. A needle well-suited for use in dispensing a plastic fastener of the type comprising a connector having a first cross-member at a first end thereof, said needle comprising:
 - (a) a flat bottom wall,
- (b) a pair of spaced apart sidewalfs which extend orthogonally up from said flat bottom wall, and
- (c) a pair of flanges, one flange being formed onto and extending orthogonally inward from the free end of each of said pair of sidewalls.
- 13. The needle as claimed in claim 12 wherein each of said pair of spaced apart sidewalls is flat.
- 4. The needle as claimed in claim 13 wherein each of said pair of flanges is flat.

- 15. The needle as claimed in claim 12 wherein said needle is shaped to define a longitudinally-extending bore which is adapted to receive the cross-member of the plastic fastener, said bore being generally rectangular in lateral cross-section.
- 16. The needle as claimed in claim 15 wherein the free ends of said pair of flanges are spaced apart so as to define a longitudinally-extending slot which is adapted to receive the connector of the plastic fastener.
- 17. The needle as claimed in claim 16 wherein said needle comprises a sharpened tip.
- 18. A combination of a fastener and a needle, said fastener comprising a connector having a first cross-member at a first end thereof and a second cross-member at a second end thereof, the first cross-member having a flat inner surface and a flat outer surface, said needle terminating in a tip at a front end thereof and being shaped to define a longitudinally-extending bore and a longitudinally-extending slot, said longitudinally-extending bore being dimensioned to receive said first cross-member, said longitudinally-extending slot being dimensioned to permit said connector to extend therethrough while said cross-member is disposed within said longitudinally-extending bore.
- 19. The combination as claimed in claim 18 wherein said first cross-member is in the form of a thin disk.
- 20. The combination as claimed in claim 18 wherein the second cross-member of said fastener comprises a flat igner surface and a flat outer surface.



- 22. The combination as claimed in claim 18 wherein said needle comprises:
 - (a) a flat bottom wall,
- (b) a pair of flat, spaced apart sidewalls which extend orthogonally up from said flat bottom wall, and
- (c) a pair of flat flanges, one flange being formed onto and extending orthogonally inward from the free end of each of said pair of sidewalls.
- 23. The needle as claimed in claim 22 wherein the bore defined by said needle is generally rectangular in lateral cross-section.